

Message Text

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47

ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 AF-04 NEA-06 SAJ-01 SSO-00 INRE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2070

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES PRIORITY

AMCONSUL LUANDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY

USMISSION NATO PRIORITY

DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER PRIORITY

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 1397

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PO

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER MARIO SOARES

REFS: (A) STATE 55943; (B) LISBON 1393; (C) LISBON 304

1. CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER SOARES AT MY REQUEST TODAY AND GAVE HIM COPY OF DEPARTMENT PRESS GUIDANCE CONTAINED REFTEL (A). SOARES READ IT WITH INTEREST.

2. TOLD SOARES I UNDERSTOOD HIS POSITION WAS PRESENTLY VERY DELICATE AND I DID NOT WANT TO DO ANYTHING THAT MIGHT MAKE CONFIDENTIAL

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MATTERS MORE COMPLICATED. NEVERTHELESS I WAS CONCERNED ABOUT

PRESENT ORGANIZED CAMPAIGN TO LINK USG TO ABORTIVE COUP ATTEMPT.
SHOWED HIM PRESS STORY THIS MORNING CLAIMING I HAD BEEN IN
CHILE BEFORE COMING HERE AND CITED RADIO REPORT THAT I HAD
CALLED ON SPINOLA ONE WEEK BEFORE THE COUP. TOLD HIM UNLESS
HE SAW SOME OBJECTION I INTENDED TO BE MORE VIGOROUS IN DENYING
THESE CHARGES PUBLICLY. I WAS ALSO ANXIOUS TO HAVE HIS ADVICE
ON WHAT USG MIGHT DO TO BE HELPFUL IN PRESENT SITUATION.

3. SOARES SHRUGGED HIS SHOULDERS AND SAID WHAT I WANTED TO DO
WAS MY DECISION. HE WAS, IN FACT, AN "INTERIM" MINISTER RIGHT
NOW AND HIS ONLY KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING CAME FROM
NEWSPAPERS. THE MILITARY WERE MAKING ALL THE DECISIONS AND
WILL DECIDE ON STRUCTURE OF NEW COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. IF
THEY ASK HIM TO TAKE A PORTFOLIO HE WOULD THEN HAVE TO JUDGE
WHETHER ACCEPTANCE WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH HIS STAND AGAINST
DICTATORSHIP. IF THEY DON'T ASK HIM, HIS MORAL DILEMMA IS
SOLVED.

4. SOARES SAID HE COULD TELL ME THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED THE
OTELO STATEMENT WITH PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES AND PRIME MINISTER
VASCO GONCALVES WHO HAD AUTHORIZED HIM TO TELL ME THAT "OTELO
WAS SPEAKING IN HIS PERSONAL CAPACITY AND NOT AS REPRESENTATIVE
OF GOP." WHEN I PRESSED HIM FURTHER HE SAID PRESIDENT HAD TOLD
HIM HE NOT CONCERNED ABOUT VIOLENCE. "BUT OF COURSE," SOARES
ADDED, "KIDNAPPING AND VIOLENCE AGAINST AMBASSADORS HAPPEN IN
MANY COUNTRIES AND IF IT HAPPENS TO YOU GOP WILL DO EVERYTHING
POSSIBLE."

5. SOARES SAID POLITICAL PARTIES HAD BEEN SUMMONED BY PRIME
MINISTER YESTERDAY AND TOLD ABOUT INSTITUTIONALIZATION PROGRAM
(SEE REFTEL B). NET EFFECT OF GIVING BROADER POWERS TO
REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL WAS TO PUSH THE POLITICAL PARTIES OUT-
SIDE THE POWER SPECTRUM (THE PHRASE HE USED WAS "MARGINALIZE
POLITICAL PARTIES"). SAID THE PARTIES NOW HAD TO DETERMINE
WHETHER IT WAS WORTHWHILE PARTICIPATING IN THE PROCESS.

6. SOARES CLOSED BY SAYING HE HAD ALWAYS TRIED AS FOREIGN
MINISTER TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH U.S. AND THE WEST IN
GENERAL. HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT THE POLICY OF THE NEW GOVERN-
MENT WOULD BE.

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7. BEFORE SEEING SOARES I CHATTED WITH HIS AIDE, SA MACHADO.
HE TOLD ME SOARES WAS TARGET OF SAME KIND OF ORGANIZED
CAMPAIGN THAT WAS BEING DIRECTED AGAINST ME. NIGHT OF COUP
MES EVEN SENT SOMEONE TO BRUSSELS TO PUT OUT A STORY THAT
SOARES HAD BEEN INVOLVED WITH SPINOLA. SA MACHADO ALSO
THOUGHT OTELLO STATEMENT WAS PART OF SMOOTHLY FUNCTIONING
COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA APPARATUS. CONCLUDED THAT ALL THIS WAS

PART OF TOTAL EFFORT TO REMOVE ANY POTENTIAL OPPOSITION. HE SAID COSTA GOMES WAS SO WEAK THAT FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD BEEN UNABLE TO GET PRESIDENT TO ISSUE ANY PUBLIC COMMENT ON OTELO STATEMENT, ALTHOUGH HAD TRIED TWICE.

8. COMMENT: SOARES IS AN EXHAUSTED MAN. THE DAY AFTER I ARRIVED HERE IN MID-JANUARY I MET WITH HIM AND FOUND HIM DEEPLY CONCERNED AND EXTREMELY NERVOUS (REFTEL C). BUT AT LEAST THERE WAS FIGHT IN HIM. TODAY HE WAS UNCOMMUNICATIVE, AND I HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT THERE WAS NOT TOO MUCH FIGHT LEFT. HOPEFULLY, I WAS NOT WITNESSING AN IBERIAN MASARYK IN THE MAKING.
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